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"Gaming machine with feature trigger"

Field of the Invention

This invention relates to a gaming machine. More particularly, the invention relates to a gaming machine and to an improvement to a game played on such a gaming
5 machine.

Background to the Invention

Players who regularly play gaming machines quickly tire of particular games and therefore it is necessary for manufacturers of these machines to develop innovative
10 game features which add interest to the games. In so doing, it is hoped to keep players amused and therefore willing to continue playing the game as well as to attract new players.

Also, with the growth that has occurred in the gaming machine market, there is intense competition between manufacturers to supply various existing and new venues.
15 When selecting a supplier of gaming machines, the operator of a venue will often pay close attention to the popularity of various games with their patrons. Therefore, gaming machine manufacturers are keen to devise games and/or game features which are popular with the players as a mechanism for improving sales, retaining customers and attracting new customers.

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Summary of the Invention

According to a first aspect of the invention, there is provided a gaming machine having a display means and a game control means arranged to control images of symbols displayed on the display means, the game control means being arranged to
25 play a game wherein at least one random event is caused to be displayed on the display means and, if a predefined winning event occurs, the machine awards a prize, wherein, if in the game, a plurality of die symbols are present on the display means, the die symbols reveal outcomes, at least one of which results in the awarding of a feature.

In this specification, the term "game" is to be understood, unless the context
30 clearly indicates otherwise, as a base game or a game that has occurred in another feature, for example, a game in a free game series.

The die symbols may change to reveal the outcomes. At least two of the die symbols may be required to initiate the change to reveal outcomes. The die symbols may change by means of an animation technique.

35 Preferably, the game is a spinning reel game. Thus, the display means may display a simulation of a set of spinning reels. The die symbols may be carried on two

different reels, for example, a first reel and a last reel of the set of reels. When the die symbols appear in a display on the display means, the die symbols may animate to reveal the outcomes. It will be appreciated that the animating of the die symbols into the said at least one outcome may act as a trigger condition for the feature.

5 The trigger condition may be selected from the group including: that the numbers on corresponding faces of the die symbols are the same, that the sum of the numbers on corresponding faces of the die symbols add up at least to a particular amount and that predetermined numbers appear on predetermined faces of the die symbols. This group is not to be considered an exhaustive group and other conditions
10 of the die symbols may constitute the trigger condition. The trigger condition may govern at least one of the type of feature awarded, a characteristic of the feature and a start position in the awarded feature.

 The die symbols may animate simultaneously or sequentially. Further, the die symbols may animate automatically. Instead, the die symbols may animate by player
15 intervention. The player intervention may involve the player operating a control means to commence the animation, to stop the animation or both. The control means may be a control switch or button on a midtrim of the gaming machine.

 The animation may be an animation of rolling a die. In one embodiment of the invention, when the displayed number on a predetermined face of the die on the first
20 reel matches the number on the corresponding face of the die on the last reel, after the animation of the rolling of each of the dice has stopped, this acts as the trigger condition to award the feature.

 The feature may be any bonus feature selected from the group including: a series of free games, a second screen feature, a feature within the existing game display, a top
25 box feature (whether mechanical or otherwise), and a number of free games in an enhanced payable mode. The preceding list is not to be construed as an exhaustive list and it is contemplated that the feature may encompass other forms of bonus features such as, for example, the paying of a bonus prize.

 According to a second aspect of the invention, there is provided a game to be
30 played on a game playing apparatus, the gaming playing apparatus having a display means and a game control means arranged to control images displayed on the display means, wherein, if in the game, a plurality of die symbols are present on the display means, the die symbols reveal outcomes, at least one of which results in the awarding of a feature.

A game playing apparatus includes one which does not require the wagering of a stake in order to play the game and further includes apparatus which is connectable to a network.

5 **Brief Description of the Drawings**

The invention is now described by way of example with reference to the accompanying diagrammatic drawings in which:-

Figure 1 shows a perspective view of a gaming machine, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention;

10 Figure 2 shows a block diagram of a control circuit of the gaming machine;

Figure 3 shows a screen display of a result of a first game played on the gaming machine of Figure 1;

Figure 4 shows a screen display of a result of a subsequent game;

15 Figures 5a to 5c show screen displays of a sequence of events following the game shown in Figure 4; and

Figure 6 shows a flow chart of the game of Figures 4 and 5.

Detailed Description of the Drawings

In Figure 1, reference numeral 10 generally designates a gaming machine, including a game, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. The machine 10 includes a console 12 having a video display unit 14 on which a game 16 is played, in use. The game 16 is a spinning reel game which simulates the rotation of a number of spinning reels 18. A midtrim 20 of the machine 10 houses a bank 22 of buttons for enabling a player to play the game 16. The midtrim 20 also houses a credit input 25 mechanism 24 including a coin input chute 24.1 and a bill collector 24.2.

The machine 10 includes a top box 26 on which artwork 28 is carried. The artwork 28 includes paytables, details of bonus awards, etc.

A coin tray 30 is mounted beneath the console 12 for cash payouts from the machine 10.

30 Referring now to Figure 2 of the drawings, a control means or control circuit 32 is illustrated. A program which implements the game and user interface is run on a processor 34 of the control circuit 32. The processor 34 forms part of a controller 36 that drives the screen of the video display unit 14 and that receives input signals from sensors 38. The sensors 38 include sensors associated with the bank 22 of buttons and touch sensors mounted in the screen of the video display unit 14. The controller 36 35 also receives input pulses from the mechanism 24 to determine whether or not a player

has provided sufficient credit to commence playing. The mechanism 24 may, instead of the coin input chute 24.1 or the bill collector 24.2, or in addition thereto, be a credit card reader (not shown) or any other type of validation device.

Finally, the controller 36 drives a payout mechanism 40 which, for example, 5 may be a coin hopper for feeding coins to the coin tray 30 to make a pay out to a player when the player wishes to redeem his or her credit.

The game 16 is, as indicated above, a spinning reel game which simulates the rotation of a number, more particularly five, spinning reels 18.

Figure 3 of the drawings shows a screen display 50 of a game result after the 10 player had caused the reels 18 to be spun. It is assumed that the gaming machine 10 has three paylines 52, 54 and 56 and that the player is playing all three paylines 52, 54 and 56 and, further, that the player is betting one credit per line.

The player is awarded a prize of 30 credits for the 3 x K on the first payline 52.

The player then causes the reels 18 to be spun again and a screen display 58 of a 15 subsequent game result is shown in Figure 4 of the drawings.

In the game result shown in Figure 4 of the drawings, no prize winning combinations of symbols appear on any of the paylines 52, 54 and 56. As a result, no prize is awarded to the player. However, a first die symbol 60 is spun up on the first reel 18.1 of the set of reels 18 and a second die symbol 62 is spun up on the fifth reel 20 18.5 of the set of reels 18. Each die symbol 60, 62 is a three dimensional depiction of a die 64.

The occurrence of the die symbols 60 and 62 on the first reel 18.1 and the second reel 18.5, respectively, constitute a special condition.

This special condition results initially in the animation of the die symbols 60 and 25 62. In the embodiment shown in Figure 5a of the drawings, both die symbols 60 and 62 animate together. The animation is a representation of the rolling of each of the dice 64.

As shown in Figure 5b of the drawings, the animation in respect of the rolling of the die 64 of the first die symbol 60 comes to an end before the animation of the second 30 die symbol 62 on the reel 18.5. The die 64 comes to rest with a particular one of its numbers appearing on what is, in effect, a front face 64.1 of the die 64.

Thereafter, as shown in Figure 5c of the drawings, the animation of the rolling of the die 64 of the second die symbol 62 stops with one of the numbers of the die 64 visible on what is, in effect, its front face 64.1. If the numbers on the faces 64.1 of the 35 dice 64 match, a feature is triggered and a message, as illustrated at 66, is displayed on the screen display 58 to enable the player to commence a feature.

In this embodiment of the invention the feature is, for example, a board game which may be played as a second screen feature or on a separate screen. The outcome of the animation of the die symbols 60 and 62 governs a start position in the board game feature. The matching pair of the dice 64 triggers the feature and, because the
5 matching numbers on the faces 64.1 of the dice 64 were "fives", the feature commences at position five on a playing board of the board game, for example, the fifth square or block of the playing board.

The animations of the die symbols 60 and 62 occur automatically as described above. Instead, by the player pressing a predetermined button of the bank 22 of buttons
10 on the midtrim 20 of the gaming machine 10, the player can start the animation of the die symbols 60 and 62 when desired. In addition, the animation of the die symbols 60 and 62 can stop automatically or, instead, the player can stop the animation of the die symbols 60 and 62, either individually or together, to see if the player can control the matching of the numbers on the front faces 64.1 of the dice 64.

15 The feature which is triggered could be any of a number of features such as a series of free game, a second screen feature, a feature within the existing game screen display 58 such as, for example, the Applicant's Penguin Pays[®] feature, a mechanical top box feature such as a backlit board game, a number of games in an enhanced payable mode, the paying of a bonus prize, or the like. The actual type of feature
20 which is awarded is not relevant to the present invention.

It is an advantage of the invention that a game is provided which enhances player interest as a sense of anticipation is built up due to the animation of the die symbols.

It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations
25 and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.